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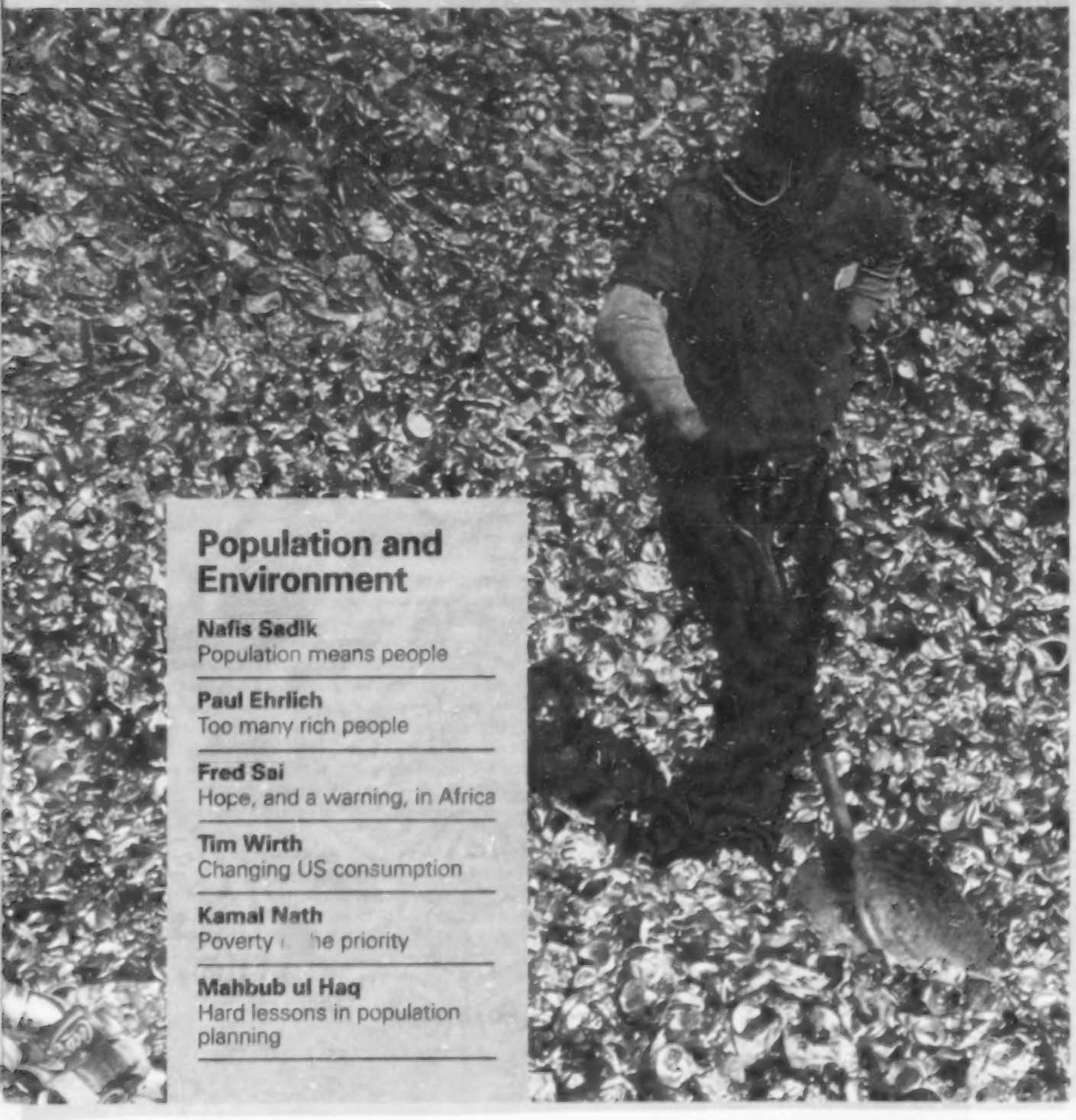

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EDITORIAL

UNEP

ELIZABETH DOWDESWELL
United Nations Under-Secretary General and Executive Director, UNEP

As we begin to understand the thresholds of the planet we inhabit, we face some rather perplexing, if not frightening, scenarios heading into the 21st century. How can we sustain a population that will possibly double in the next 40 years and thus require four times the food calories and eight times the energy and income levels needed today?

Of course, there is a degree of uncertainty to these statistics, which reflects the complex yet inexact population-resource-environment dynamic. Despite that uncertainty, the international community has in the past five years embraced the precautionary principle. And rightfully – and we hope not belatedly – so. In the light of our relatively shallow understanding of the intricacies of nature, as well as our responsibilities to future generations, the precautionary principle is indeed a prerequisite to a sustainable future.

As with past and future debacles on environmental issues, the population issue with its disparate, uneven playing field, has a distinct North-South slant. In the North, for the most part, it has been seen as a numbers game, while in the South, it is also a numbers game, but the numbers deal more with per capita resource depletion than census figures. There is no doubt that the problem caused by unsustainable population growth and its possible solutions must be seen in both terms. That means that the North must reduce its abusive consumption patterns; and the South, with the help of the North, must secure the conditions necessary to reduce its exponential population growth. Without solutions to both, humankind will be guilty of its own undoing.

At UNEP, we feel we can make a contribution to the debate by identifying measures to reduce consumption patterns and accurately measure levels of resource depletion. In our Environment and Economics Unit, we are working, together with other institutions, in defining new, integrated principles that will gauge economic growth in real, green terms. Our Paris Industry and Environment Programme Activity Centre, particularly in its activities to promote cleaner production techniques, and the new International Environmental Technology Centre in Japan, are both important components of our effort to identify achievable solutions to excessive resource depletion, both in the North and the South.

At the same time that the North is now beginning to look at itself in the mirror, the South must do the same. In the many burgeoning economies of the developing world, the lifestyles of the North are being mimicked. So unsustainable consumption patterns are slowly becoming a global phenomenon.

For the developing world, the most crucial means of halting unsustainable growth is undoubtedly through the empowerment of women, the enhancement of both political and economic rights, and the opportunity for universal education.

As a species, we are blessed with the ability to choose. This could be our downfall – as it has been so often in the past – or we could finally put the potential of collective intellects to work and realistically address the problems we face. However, unless the international community begins to address the issue of poverty alleviation, then the poor – in both the North and the South – will never be able to see the choices they could possibly make.

In this issue of ***Our Planet***, we feel UNEP has added to the debate on finding possible solutions. Several prominent thinkers approach the issue from a variety of angles, prodding each one of us to examine how we, both individually and collectively, can contribute to the search for answers. If we don't at least begin to address these problems, then the doomsday scenarios put forward by demographers – though disputed by a few others – could prove more accurate than any of us cares to imagine.

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READEX
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PERSPECTIVE

Joe Kirwin

THE POPULATION-ENVIRONMENT LINK

More than 200 years ago, British economist Thomas Malthus sounded the first alarm on the issue of population growth and its impact on resource depletion. While the impending food shortages predicted by Malthus never materialized, the theory did set off a debate that still rages today.

In the past 20 years that debate has taken on several new aspects as scientists, demographers and others search for scientific laws to define and order the complex interaction of population and resource depletion. Whereas resource depletion was previously seen in terms of food supplies, it has now been widened to cover environmental degradation in terms of air, water and soil pollution, ozone depletion, global warming and others.

'Everyone sees the population-environment interaction as a complex and dynamic set of relationships, and some aspects of human technology and institutions are mediating these relationships,' say the authors of *Population-Environment Dynamics*, which was published in 1993. 'But there is a consensus that the modern period is one of unprecedented transformation.'

Of course it was no coincidence that the no-growth maxims common within Western environmental circles in the 1970s also gained prominence at this time. Meanwhile, resource use in the West continued to expand exponentially while the populations of the developing world did the same.

When the preparations for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) were taking place, the way these two factors were interpreted fell in line with the North-South polarization that characterized much of the Conference. As an indication of how sensitive the subject was, the proposal of some nations to have population as part of the name of the Conference was roundly rejected.

WHAT THE NUMBERS REALLY MEAN

'It was simply a case of the Western world looking at population growth in terms of numbers,' said Martin Khor, a Malaysian environmentalist with the Third World Network. 'They could not see through those numbers and realize what they really meant in terms of resource depletion.'

Khor and other developing world NGO and government officials were determined to make Western nations see the population issue in terms of consumption patterns. The 80:20 ratio – in which the West, despite representing only 20 per cent of the world's population, uses 80 per cent of the world's resources – gained prominence at this time.

As a result of the varying viewpoints on the population issue during UNCED, the issues covered – and many felt these were woefully inadequate – underwent extensive revision. In fact, during its final preparatory meeting, the text in Agenda 21 on population was totally revamped. However, the source of much of the revision concerned the issues of family planning and the use of contraceptives.

> *'The links between population and the environment are extremely complex. The only major quibble... is consumption patterns'*

With the change in administration in the United States, the issue of consumption patterns has gained greater recognition. Vice President Al Gore delivered that message at the first session of the Commission on Sustainable Development in 1993.

Despite the change in the United States position, some of the disputes over the population and environment link have carried over into the draft Programme for the United Nations International Conference on Population and Development. This has been especially true in Chapter III, in which environmental issues have been addressed.

CONSUMPTION IS THE KEY

'Everyone has acknowledged that the links between population and the environment are extremely complex,' said Stafford Mousky, a senior advisor to the Conference Secretariat. 'The only major quibble – and it is major – is consumption patterns.'

'As far as environment and population go, there are two different schools of thought,' Mousky added. 'One school, led by India, has the view that environment should not be included in this document because it has already been handled and settled in some detail in Rio.'

'Other groups resisted that,' Mousky continued. 'The end product is something in the middle, which makes the Indians and others in the developing world unhappy, as well as the environmentalists.'

The decisions of the recently concluded Second Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, on changing consumption and production patterns, especially in the developed countries, could be a step in forging a common position while of course allaying the apprehensions of the developing countries •

Not just a numbers game

Liba Taylor/Panos Pictures

Paul Harrison describes how a balanced approach to population could make a world of difference

Population is the most controversial subject in development. And the relation between population and the environment is probably the most contentious topic of all.

Everyone can find facts to back up their own position. Deforestation is strongly related to population density, according to several studies. Yet in Latin America, deforestation has much more to do with unequal landholding, lack of city jobs, or misguided agricultural policies.

Rapid population growth has proceeded side by side with land degradation in most of Africa. Yet in places like Machakos in Kenya, farmers have responded successfully to rising population, building terraces, planting trees, and boosting farm yields and food production.

This confusing evidence is the fuel on which the debate keeps running. But surely what it *should* do is stop the controversy in its tracks. For it shows that there are no simple links. Sometimes population growth is a big factor in present environmental problems, sometimes it is not. There are always other factors involved, and if we want to solve the problems we should not just deal with one of the causes, but with as many as possible.

Things remain complex, as we look into the future. As environmental problems build up, humans will respond in ways we cannot predict. The environment may bite back with unforeseen new diseases, and other effects on human health and reproduction.

Population growth itself is not fixed. It will slow down, but by how much depends on our actions.

Different rates of population growth make only small variations in the short run, but the further you look into the future, the larger they become. The year 2050 is well within the lifetime of today's children. The United Nations' medium projection for that year is 10 billion people – 4.3 billion more than today. This is the likely outcome if we carry on past trends.

The low projection for 2050 is only 7.8 billion – 2.2 billion less than the medium one. The difference is equal to the world's population around 1930. We could achieve the low projection if we placed a high priority on population activities and on human development focussed on women.

The high projection is no less than 12.5 billion – a massive 4.7 billion more than the low one. The gap is equal to a whole extra world, as it was in 1984. If we continue to neglect women's needs we might hit this.

Success or neglect on the population front would make a huge difference. The low population projection (when compared with the medium) would leave undisturbed at least 4.4 million square kilometres of forests, wetlands, mountains and other wildlife refuges – almost equal to all today's forests in developing Asia.

The climate link

The differences for global warming would be dramatic. By 2050, achieving the low projection could mean emitting 9.3 billion tonnes less carbon dioxide than under the medium projection. This is almost three times the total emissions today from deforestation and other land use changes.

Recent studies suggest that global warming may increase the numbers of hungry in the world. If carbon dioxide levels doubled, and population followed the medium projection, then the numbers of malnourished would rise to 823 million by 2060. But with the *low* projection, only 481 million people would go hungry.

So slower population growth could make a very big difference to the environment. But what should we do about it? Again, most of the heat in the debate is generated by simplistic answers. They range from mass airdrops of contraceptives or compulsory family planning, to the ▶

denial of women's right to plan their families.

We need a more balanced and sensible view of what slowing population growth really means. Of course there must be family planning, available everywhere. But it must be of high quality, giving a free choice of a wide range of contraceptives, with good counselling and referral.

We need female education just as strongly – higher school enrolment for girls and women's literacy programmes. Women with secondary education get married later, use contraceptives more and have fewer children. We need better mother and child health to ensure healthy pregnancies and bring down the toll of child deaths. And we need wider improvements in women's rights ranging from equal power and equal pay to equal rights to own and inherit property.

Focus on women

Any aspect of this programme will slow population growth. All four together will bring it down dramatically.

Taken together, they address all aspects of women's oppression. Thus there is no practical difference between a programme of women-centred human development and a programme to slow population growth. They are one and the same thing.

At the same time they are a powerful measure to slow environmental degradation. And there is evidence from the 1980s that they may boost economic growth: smaller families can save more and their governments can spend less on education.

Yet women-centred human development has not commanded adequate priority in many government and donor budgets.

What do we need to do to raise the profile of women-centred human development? First, we need to become more aware of future population projections. We need to be aware now of the magnitude of the changes ahead.

But we also need to remember that the future is not pre-determined, and that the choices we make now will decide whether the global population will be 7.8 billion, 10 billion or 12.5 billion in 2050. For Africa the difference between the low and high population projections for 2050 is 1.22 billion people – nearly double the present *total* population. For India alone the difference is 750 million.

The whole gamut of services for women-centred human development should be present everywhere at local level

We need to build that awareness of alternative futures, and of the difference they can make to the environment, into every level – from local right up to global.

The local level is crucial. All environmental problems begin with a localized source of one kind or another – farmers, woodcutters, car drivers, factories. Sustainable development can become a reality only if we change human behaviour and values at local level.

Women's pottery cooperative mixing clay in Kisumu, Kenya

Neil Cooper/Panos Pictures

That doesn't mean that local communities should 'control' their populations so as to avoid environmental damage. They cannot and will not – there is always the option of migration.

But it does mean that local people should be trained and empowered to manage and conserve their own environment, with outside help when they need it. The whole gamut of services for women-centred human development should be present everywhere at local level. Yet there are still hundreds of thousands of communities without access to clean water, basic medical care, family planning or conservation advice.

Keeping population in mind

Services can only reach every community if governments give a high priority to human development and the environment. They will only do so if they make policy and budgets with population in mind. Some population growth is inevitable. This must be planned for in the short run (15 years or so) in agriculture, transport and so on.

But in the medium and long term, the size of future population increases can be changed by present policy, depending on the level of priority that is given to women-centred human development. National governments already have two international frameworks for strategy making on population and environment. First are the World Bank's National Environmental Action Plans. These are supposed to mention population. Most do indeed *mention* it, and no more. Few make any concrete proposals for population investments.

Second, National Sustainable Development Strategies are being prepared along the lines of Agenda 21, adopted at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio in 1992. Agenda 21's chapter on population is very strong and detailed. If it were put into action, countries would go a long way towards building population and ▶

Northern overpopulation – Southern overconsumption?

A typical debating topic goes like this: which is more responsible for global pollution – Northern overconsumption, or Southern population growth? Both, of course – and we have to deal with them both.

But the question lays a trap of another kind. For there is also population growth in the North, and overconsumption in the South.

The United States is by far the worst overconsumer and polluter in the world. But it also has a population growth rate (just over 1 per cent a year) which is now *faster* than developing countries like Korea, Hong Kong, Singapore, Fiji, Uruguay, Albania, Cyprus, Mauritius and the Seychelles.

Over the next 30 years the United States population is expected to grow by another 62 million or so. In terms of numbers, this is the tenth largest country population increase in the world between now and 2025 – just below Brazil and Bangladesh, and just ahead of Mexico and Zaire.

The environmental impact of United States population growth is even more dramatic. Every year there are an extra 2.6 million Americans. If each pumps 20 tonnes of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere (the United States average), then population growth in the United States is responsible for an extra 52 million tonnes of carbon dioxide per year.

India grows by 17 million people a year, but at much lower consumption levels. They add only an extra 13 million tonnes of carbon dioxide – a quarter of the United States total. China's annual increase of 17 million people adds just under 37 million tonnes.

So population growth in the United States has, at present, more impact on the global climate than population growth in the two biggest countries on Earth.

But equally, there is consumption growth and some 'overconsumption' in the South. Developing countries now account for half the top 20 emitters of total carbon dioxide, including four of the top 10 (China, Brazil, India and Indonesia). More surprising still, developing countries make up 12 of the top 20 emitters of carbon dioxide *per person* – including the top four. Most of these are oil producers or refiners.

General consumption is increasing in the South too. In developing Asia, consumption is growing at unprecedented rates. Per capita incomes in China grew at 8 per cent a year during the 1980s (doubling every nine years), in South Korea at 9 per cent, in Thailand at 6 per cent.

The consuming class in India is usually estimated at around 100 million, in China at perhaps 200 million. Asia's expanding consumer class already outnumbers Europe's. As yet their consumption is mostly limited to televisions, refrigerators and scooters. But the list is growing, and growing much faster than at comparable stages in Northern countries.

Sean Sprague/Panos Pictures

environment into their policy making. But many developing countries don't have the resources to develop good Agenda 21 strategies, or to build population into them. The United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Capacity 21 Programme provides technical help to do this, but it needs far more resources to help more countries.

A third framework

These two frameworks will soon be joined by a third. The United Nations International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo will propose national strategies. These too will link population and environment. But the proposals for doing so are much more modest than in Agenda 21. The United Nations should speak with one voice on these issues. If it does not, countries will serve the less demanding of two masters.

Aid donors are increasingly aware of the population and environment link. But the share of aid going to health, education and environment sectors is still modest. Two donors – Australia and New Zealand – gave around half their aid to health, education and environment in 1991. The average donor country gave less than 22 per cent. Meanwhile 'hard' sectors like dams, roads and industry – notorious for white elephants, corruption and environmental horror stories – got over 25 per cent. The balance must change.

A programme of women-centred development and a programme to slow population growth... are one and the same thing

Education, health and environment make up the core of what UNDP Administrator Gus Speth calls 'sustainable human development'. This fuses two older concepts: sustainable development and human development. We all know that development must be sustainable if the globe is not to be plunged into catastrophe. More and more countries are also realizing that human development – the improvement of health, education and participation – is the foundation of democracy and of economic development in a technological age.

New focus for the next decade

The time is ripe for a new guiding concept. This year the population conference in Cairo. Next year the Social Summit in Copenhagen and the women's 10-yearly conference in Beijing. The scene is set for sustainable human development – with special emphasis on women – to become a new focus for thinking about aid and development in the next decade •

Paul Harrison is author of The Third Revolution *(Penguin Books). He is a holder of a United Nations Environment Programme Global 500 Award and a Population Institute Global Media Award.*

WOMEN
population and the future

Nafis Sadik charts the road from Cairo

In September, heads of state including President Suharto of Indonesia and Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland of Norway will meet in Cairo with political leaders from another 180 countries, including Vice President Al Gore at the head of the United States delegation. The meeting is the United Nations International Conference on Population and Development, and it could be one of the most important held in recent times.

The main topic of debate in Cairo will be a new approach to population policy that emphasizes people rather than numbers. There is global consensus on the need for balanced population growth. There is also agreement on the need for human development. Each is important: but the significance of the Cairo Conference lies in the connections between them.

The decision makers

According to this 'new' view, concern with population demands first and foremost that we concentrate on individual well-being, including especially better health care and education for women. This will affect individual decisions on family formation and family size. It will influence decisions on where family members live and work. Most important, it will affect women's contribution to development, and how that contribution is assessed.

The sum of all these individual decisions will determine the size of world population; its distribution and the rate at which it will grow in the next century. Eventually it will help to decide the future of all our efforts towards sustainable development.

World population is 5.7 billion

UNFPA

people, more than twice as many as in 1955; it is growing at 93 million people a year, more than ever before; 93 per cent of the growth is in developing countries. The pace of population growth will affect every country, developed or developing, and every area of our lives: politics, economics, trade and migration; resources and the environment; our air, our water and our food. The future of sustainable development will depend in part on how many people there are to sustain.

The United Nations' 'medium' or most likely projection for the year 2050 is 10 billion people. A projection is not a prediction. The United Nations says that world population in 2050 could be as high as 12.5 billion; it could be as low as 7.8 billion. The final count will depend on decisions in the next decade – decisions not made by politicians or policy makers, but by millions of ordinary women and men.

Over the last 30 years, an explosion in the use of modern family planning worldwide has brought lower birth rates and gradually slower population growth. Better health care and better education have made these choices possible, by increasing the power of individuals to make them. This applies especially to women.

The dice are loaded against women from birth. In many societies, throughout childhood and adolescence, they can expect less than their fair share of household resources, whether for food, health or education. Their special needs – for nutrition, for reproductive health care, for information about pregnancy and how to avoid it – are likely to be ignored. Their future security and status depend on being married, and on having children. If the children are boys, so much the better. Little status attaches to the mother of a family of girls.

Once they are married, they will be expected to work long hours in the home for no pay; outside the home they will do the lower paying jobs, or earn less than men for the same work. They may do much of the work that keeps the community alive, but they often have little part in the decisions that shape its future.

Women want to choose

Today, women everywhere are demanding that this must change, if not for themselves then for their daughters. They want education, health care and fair pay for their work. They want to choose when and whether they will be married, and when and whether they will have children. They want the legal right to choice in marriage, divorce, property ownership and inheritance; ▶

and they want their rights to be enforced.

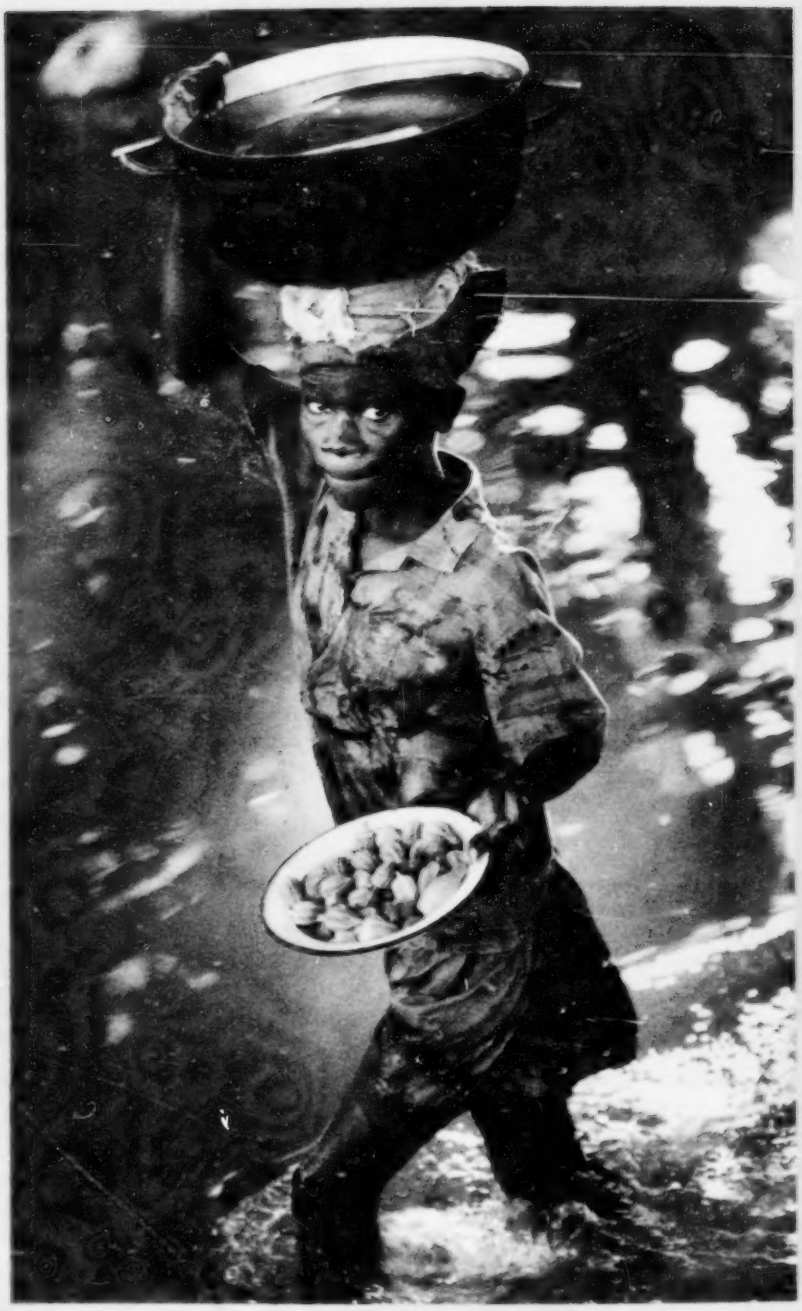
Above all, women want respect, not as mothers or daughters or wives, but as women; and as women they want to be recognized and rewarded for what they do in the family, the community and the world. At the centre of their demands is the call for recognition of the basic right of all couples and individuals to decide freely and responsibly the number and spacing of their children, and to have the information and means to do so.

Today, women everywhere are demanding change, if not for themselves then for their daughters

This right has been recognized since 1968, and endorsed many times since then: but it is still a fact that 350 million women in developing countries – 45 per cent – cannot exercise it. Of these, an estimated 120 million women would like to space or limit their pregnancies, but lack the means to do so. If they could make their own choices about childbearing, the world would be well on the road to the lowest of the United Nations' projections. That would make a difference of 2.5 billion in the population in 2050.

Many countries have seen dramatic changes in family planning, fertility and family size in recent years. Among them are South Korea, Malaysia, Mexico, Singapore and Thailand. In fact all the 'newly-industrializing countries' whose economies have forged ahead in recent years have invested in human development at the same time and on the same basis as economic development. They have educated their girls as well as boys; they have opened up training and skills for women that allow them to earn incomes; they have provided universal access to reproductive health care and family planning.

Slower population growth, even if we can achieve it, carries no guarantees about the future of the environment. After all, the bulk of environmental damage is caused not by the poorer (and rapidly-growing) four-fifths of the world's population, but by the richest (or slower-growing) fifth, most of whom live in the industrialized countries.



Mark Edwards/Still Pictures

But consider for a moment the ambitions of those four-fifths. They would like to join the ranks of the affluent – and the whole purpose of development is to allow them to do so. What does that imply for the prospects for sustainability? Clearly, it depends on the route taken – whether the development paradigm itself is designed to be sustainable.

Not enough work has yet been done to tell us what such a sustainable

development paradigm might look like. However, it would certainly include slower population growth.

Measures to improve education, reproductive health care and family planning services, and to promote equality and respect for women, are simple and undramatic. They call for no great strides in technology or vast transfers of resources from North to South.

They do, however, call for commitment. The willingness to make that commitment will be tested in Cairo.

Setting the agenda

The delegates at Cairo will have a comprehensive and precedent-setting draft Programme of Action before them. Questions of reproductive health, especially including maternal mortality and adolescent pregnancy, are high on the agenda. The Programme also makes recommendations on how to reach parity in education, on attaining gender equality and on securing the involvement of men. The Conference is the culmination of a three-year process, which has produced a very wide area of agreement on all these important issues. The result is a document that speaks directly to the needs of women and men throughout the world, and in doing so, addresses the future of the planet itself. It represents no particular culture or system of belief, but contains principles and practices acceptable to all.

If women could make their own choices about childbearing, the world would be well on the road to the lowest of the United Nations' projections. That would make a difference of 2.5 billion in the population in 2050

If the Conference objectives are to be met, resources for population and development programmes will need to increase substantially, though the sums involved are tiny compared with other forms of expenditure. A fraction – perhaps as low as 4 per cent – of development assistance would provide all the resources needed from the donor side to implement the Programme, about a third of the total. (The developing countries themselves will provide the bulk of the resources in future, as they do now.) Japan and the United States have each pledged to raise their support for population programmes significantly. It is hoped that other donors will follow their lead, accepting that investment in human development now will reap huge advantages in economic development and sustainability in the future.

Given the warm reception it received from the vast majority of the delegates during the preparatory process, we hope that the Cairo Conference will adopt the Programme of Action with few modifications. We hope that it will serve as a liberating force for women throughout the world and as one of the cornerstones of social and economic progress in the 21st century•

Dr Nafis Sadik is Secretary-General of the United Nations International Conference on Population and Development and Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund.

- In mid-1994, the world's population reached 5.7 billion. Of this, 1.2 billion live in industrialized countries, 4.4 billion in developing countries.
- Every year there are more than 90 million additional people alive on Earth.
- Over the 1990s the number of people in developing countries is expected to grow by some 900 million, or about a quarter. The population of developed countries would grow by about 50 million, or around 5 per cent.
- Women in developed countries average 1.7 children apiece; those in developing countries average 3.6 children.
- By the end of this decade, India will have become the world's second population billionaire, after China.
- An African woman faces one chance in 21 of dying as a result of pregnancy. The risk for a North American woman is one in 6,366.
- Each Canadian uses about the equivalent of 9,390kg of oil in commercial energy each year, while each Chadian uses the equivalent of just 17kg. By the same measure, each citizen of The Netherlands uses 5,210kg; each citizen of Nepal just 22kg.
- On average, Americans each generate more than 800kg of rubbish each year, more than 10 times as much as Egyptians.
- In 1992, there were 19 million refugees in developing countries. Iran provided a home for 4.1 million of these, Pakistan 1.6 million and Malawi just over 1 million.

Too many rich people

Paul Ehrlich weighs up relative burdens on the planet

Ron Giling/Panos Pictures

Concern about population problems among citizens of rich countries generally focusses on rapid population growth in most poor nations. But the impact of humanity on Earth's life support systems is not just determined by the number of people alive on the planet. It also depends on how those people behave. When this is considered, an entirely different picture emerges: the main population problem is in wealthy countries. There are, in fact, too many rich people.

The amount of resources each person consumes, and the damage done by the technologies used to supply them, need to be taken as much into account as the size of the population. In theory, the three factors should be multiplied together to obtain an accurate measurement of the impact on the planet.* Unhappily, governments do not keep statistics that allow the consumption and technology factors to be readily measured – so scientists substitute per capita energy consumption to give a measure of the effect each person has on the environment.

Using and consuming

This makes sense. All human activities require the use of energy, and the most environmentally destructive of those activities for the most part require a great deal of it. Human beings use energy to obtain resources, process them into useful items, and then use or consume them. At every step environmental damage is done.

In traditional societies – more or less in balance with their environments – that damage may be self-repairing. Wood cut for fires or structures regrows, soaking up the carbon dioxide produced when it was burned. Water extracted from streams is replaced by rainfall. Soils in fields are regenerated with the help of crop residues and animal manures. Wastes are broken down and reconverted into nutrients by the decomposer organisms of natural ecosystems.

At the other end of the spectrum, paving over fields and forests with concrete and asphalt, mining the coal and iron necessary for steel production with all its associated land degradation, and building and operating automobiles, trains and aeroplanes that spew pollutants into the atmosphere, are all energy-intensive processes. So are drilling for and transporting oil and gas, producing plastics, manufacturing chemicals (from DDT and synthetic nitrogen fertilizers to chlorofluorocarbons and laundry detergents) and building power plants and dams. Industrialized agriculture uses enormous amounts of energy – for ploughing, planting, fertilizing and controlling weeds and insect pests, and for harvesting, processing, shipping, packing, storing and selling foods. So does industrialized forestry for timber and paper production.

Paying the price

Incidents such as Chernobyl and oil spills are among the environmental prices paid for mobilizing commercial energy – and soil erosion, desertification, acid rain, global warming, destruction of the ozone layer and the toxification of the entire planet are among the costs of using it.

In all, humanity's high-energy activities amount to a large-scale attack on the integrity of Earth's ecosystems and the critical services they provide. These include control of the mix of gases in the atmosphere (and thus of the climate); running of the hydrologic cycle which brings us dependable flows of fresh water; generation and maintenance of fertile soils; disposal of wastes; recycling of the nutrients essential to agriculture and forestry; control of the vast majority of potential crop pests; pollination of many crops; provision of food from the sea; and maintenance of a vast genetic library from which humanity has already withdrawn the very basis

The relationship is summarized in the classic I=PAT identity: Impact is equal to Population size, multiplied by per capita consumption (Affluence), in turn multiplied by a measure of the damage done by the Technologies chosen to supply each unit of consumption.

of civilization in the form of crops and domestic animals.

The relative impact

The average rich-nation citizen used 7.4 kilowatts (kW) of energy in 1990 – a continuous flow of energy equivalent to that powering 74 100-watt lightbulbs. The average citizen of a poor nation, by contrast, used only 1kW. There were 1.2 billion people in the rich nations, so their total environmental impact, as measured by energy use, was 1.2 billion x 7.4kW, or 8.9 terawatts (TW) – 8.9 trillion watts. Some 4.1 billion people lived in poor nations in 1990, hence their total impact (at 1kW a head) was 4.1TW.

The relatively small population of rich people therefore accounts for roughly two-thirds of global environmental destruction, as measured by energy use. From this perspective, the most important population problem is overpopulation in the industrialized nations.

The United States poses the most serious threat of all to human life support systems. It has a gigantic population, the third largest on Earth, more than a quarter of a billion people. Americans are superconsumers, and use inefficient technologies to feed their appetites. Each, on average, uses 11kW of energy, twice as much as the average

The relatively small population of rich people accounts for roughly two-thirds of global environmental destruction

Japanese, more than three times as much as the average Spaniard, and over 100 times as much as an average Bangladeshi. Clearly, achieving an average family size of 1.5 children in the United States (which would still be larger than the 1.3 child average in Spain) would benefit the world much more than a similar success in Bangladesh.

Closing the gap

Professor John P. Holdren of the University of California has generated an 'optimistic' scenario for solving the population-resource-environment predicament. This envisages population growth halted at 10 billion a century from now, and rich nations reducing their energy consumption to 3kW a head. His population target is feasible with modest effort, and the reduction in energy consumption could be achieved with technologies already in hand – given the necessary political will – and would produce an increase in the quality of life. This would provide room for needed economic growth in poor nations, which could triple their per-person energy use to 3kW. Thus the gap between rich and poor nations would be closed, while the total world impact would increase from 13TW to 30TW (10 billion x 3kW).

Will the environment a century hence be able to support 2.3 times as much activity as today? It's questionable, but perhaps with care it could, at least temporarily. Success would require a degree of cooperation, care for our fellow human beings, and respect for the environment that are nowhere evident now. But society has shown it can change rapidly when the time is ripe; let us hope that the United Nations International Conference on Population and Development will help ripen the time•

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Neil Peters/Impact

Hope, and a warning, IN AFRICA

1991 Jerry Howard

Fred Sai unveils the background to a tragedy

At the very heart of the African continent, there is a dreadful warning of what can happen when population pressures become too intense. Overcrowding and land shortages are important factors (among such others as poverty and poor governance) in the tragic inter-ethnic conflicts in Rwanda.

Overcrowding reaches terrible proportions: in the country as a whole there are 405 people for every square kilometre – and this rises to as many as 560 in Ruhengeri Prefecture. These are densities more usually seen in urban areas, imposed on a rural country.

Crowding on the country's limited agricultural land is already almost unthinkably high – and before the current civil war the population was set to double in just two decades. In 1990 there were 6.2 Rwandans for every cultivatable hectare; this will almost certainly rise to 9.1 by the end of this decade, and to 12.6 by 2010.

Landholdings have fragmented. Even 10 years ago, families of up to eight people were living off plots as small as 0.13 hectare (approximately 30 by 40 metres) in Gisenyi and Cyangugu Prefectures. And these tiny plots will inevitably shrink further as population densities increase.

Land under pressure

In Rwanda – as wherever fertilizers and the other high-technology inputs needed to increase yields are scarce – population pressure causes more marginal land to be brought under the plough. Pastureland and forests are turned into cropland. Fallow periods are reduced, giving the soil less time to recover. All of this leads to soil erosion and, in the long run, to reduced soil fertility. Between 1970 and 1986, the amount of cultivated land in Rwanda increased by more than 50 per cent, from 528,000 to 826,500 hectares. As a result, the amount of fallow land was cut almost in half and 60 per cent of the pastureland disappeared, as it shrank from 488,000 to 199,000 hectares. This has particularly affected the minority Tutsi people, traditional pastoralists.

People do modify their social behaviour under such pressures, and Rwandans have been marrying later and having smaller families. Young men have to wait longer to acquire the *rugo* – the small plot of land necessary for raising a family; and when they do, they know they will have difficulty supporting the same number of children as their parents had.

Knowledge and use of family planning have risen rapidly in the last decade, if from a very low base. In 1983 only 1 per cent of people used modern methods of contraception; by 1992 this had risen to around 13 per cent. Over the same period the average age of marriage for women rose to 23 – the highest in Africa – and the total fertility rate fell, from 8.5 to 6.2 children per woman. But the relentless increase in population continues to outpace the ability of the land to sustain its people.

The evidence is all too clear: nearly half of all Rwandan children under five suffer from chronic malnutrition, stunting their growth. Despite better antenatal care and increased vaccination, the child mortality rate remains high: 150 of every 1,000 children die before their fifth birthday.

All beings react to overcrowding, and there is no doubt that it has played its part in, quite literally, preparing the ground for the tragedy of Rwanda. It serves as a warning for the rest of the continent.

A rapid rate of growth

It has often been said that land is the one thing Africa has in plenty. So, the argument goes, population growth is no problem. This is simplistic. It fails to take into account both the low natural carrying capacity of much of the continent's land and the capriciousness of its climate. It also conveniently ignores the fact that it is the rapidity of population growth which causes so much stress and suffering. Africa's average growth rate of 3 per cent per year is far higher than those in most other developing regions, and much greater than those experienced in the past by the now developed world.

Twenty-nine of the 36 poorest countries in the world are in Africa. Inevitably, illiteracy rates are high, infrastructure is inadequate, and health services are rudimentary – all making it especially difficult to introduce family planning programmes.

In recent decades, urbanization and the breakdown of traditional values have led to more childbearing than used to be socially acceptable. Every day, some 10,000 African women resort to unsafe abortion – evidence of their frustrated desire to control their fertility.

Over half the population of most African countries is under the age of 15, providing a vast pent-up demographic momentum throughout the continent. Even if Kenya, for example, were to attain the two-child family overnight, its population would continue to grow for another two generations, eventually doubling.

Encouraging signs

There are encouraging signs of the beginnings of change – but they are only sporadic and the tempo is still slow. In recent years, most African governments – nudged by global advocacy efforts and their own family planning associations – have come to accept that fewer, better spaced births produce healthier children and mothers. All but a fanatical few have dropped their earlier opposition to family planning on the grounds that it is imposed by the West, or a neocolonialist plot designed to decimate African populations. Many have simply found themselves unable to cope with the development demands of their rapidly growing populations.

The first African population policies were adopted as long ago as 1967 (in Kenya) and 1969 (in Ghana). But there was little further progress until the Kilimanjaro Plan of Action was agreed at the Second African Population Conference in Arusha in 1984 – which was held to prepare for the last World Population Conference in Mexico City that same year. A new generation of population policies followed and many countries strengthened their family planning programmes.

By the time of the Third African Population Conference in Dakar in December 1992 (part of the preparations for the United Nations International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo) African ▶

UPI/Jeremy Hartley

delegates were almost unanimously speaking of the importance of family planning both as a human right and a development issue. The Conference declaration included Africa's first targets for reducing the regional growth rate to 2.5 per cent by the year 2000 and 2 per cent by 2010; for increasing contraceptive prevalence to 'about 20 per cent' by 2000, and 40 per cent by 2010; and for lowering maternal mortality, through quality family planning services and a reduction in unsafe abortion, by 50 per cent by the end of the century. That was a tremendous step forward, although I still do not think African governments are putting enough effort into their programmes on the ground.

In sub-Saharan Africa as a whole, only 9 per cent of married women are using contraceptives, as against 36 per cent in North Africa and the Middle East, 40 per cent in South and Southeast Asia and 60 per cent in Latin America. Only a few countries – such as South Africa, Zimbabwe, Botswana and Kenya – have family planning programmes successful enough to increase contraceptive use to around 50, 45, 35 and 33 per cent respectively.

A good example

Kenya provides the most dramatic example. Contraceptive use rose threefold in the 1980s in Kenya. Fertility fell 22 per cent from 8.3 to 6.5 children per woman, and the average desired family size fell 35 per cent from 7.2 to 4.7 children.

Governments do seem to have faced up to the fact that high population growth rates are among the factors preventing them from satisfying their peoples' development aspirations

Traditional Kenyan values favour many children. But rapid population growth has put farmland under pressure in many areas, making big families less advantageous. Higher female literacy has helped promote new attitudes to family size. Increasingly, parents want to send their children to school, and rising school costs have made it much more expensive to educate large families.

These trends have fuelled the demand for family planning. The government is strongly committed to providing diversified and accessible family planning services – an essential feature for the success of any population programme – so there has been a strong uptake and birth rates have fallen. There is still a high unmet need for family planning in Kenya, and birth rates will surely fall further as this demand is gradually satisfied. Botswana, too, has made notable strides through a combination of better development and strong family planning programmes.

Twenty-four African governments, ruling three-quarters of the continent's people, now view their population growth rates as too high. Their concerns are social, economic and environmental.

Facing the facts

Many of them wonder how they will provide the schools, hospitals and jobs for the next generation. Many are concerned about food supplies: only a few countries, such as Zimbabwe, have carried out agricultural policies that have enabled them to become self-sufficient in food. Some are deeply worried about the growing incapacity of the environmental resource base to sustain still more people.

In many regions, particularly the Sahel, population growth has already exceeded the carrying capacity of the land. Some 200 million people, out of the present African population of 550 million, receive less than 90 per cent of the minimum of 2,200 calories a day needed to maintain an active working life; another 150 million are subject to acute food deficits, and 30-50 million are actually starving.

African countries face many other desperate situations which are precipitated or made worse by high birth rates. But governments do seem to have faced up to the fact that high population growth rates are among the factors preventing them from satisfying their peoples' development aspirations. And this offers hope that the Rwandan warning will be heard•

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Dr. Fred T. Sai is President of the International Planned Parenthood Federation.

Changing consumption in the United States

In 1991, United States Senator Tim Wirth surprised much of the American political world when he decided not to run for a third term in the upper house of the American Congress. Wirth, a Democrat from the state of Colorado, expressed his frustration at the legislative gridlock that had paralysed a country facing mounting social, economic and environmental problems.

But his leave of absence from Washington, DC was shortlived. As the co-chairman of Bill Clinton's presidential campaign, Wirth was given a key position as United States Under-Secretary of State for Global Affairs.

With the population issue a major part of his brief, Wirth has played an instrumental role, not only in reversing the population policies of United States Presidents Ronald Reagan and George Bush, but in working together with developed and developing nations in the United Nations International Conference on Population and Development negotiations.

Fresh from the final round of preparatory talks in New York, Tim Wirth met **Our Planet** *UNEP Editor Joe Kirwin for the following interview.*

***Q** Could you briefly give a description of your interpretation of the relationship between population growth and environmental degradation?*

A I think that the rapid growth of the world's population threatens our ability to provide economic opportunities, to maintain any kind of political stability and to preserve the environment. The three are absolutely interlinked and we must intervene very aggressively with measures to allow individuals to make choices about the sizes of their families and the spacing of their children.

***Q** You didn't mention consumption patterns. Many people in the developing world think this is a bigger problem than sheer numbers and does not receive the attention it should in the West. How do you respond to that? What can be done about this issue?*

A The United States is moving very aggressively on a number of fronts: the President has appointed the President's Commission on Sustainable Development and the President's Council on Sustainable Development, 25 leading Americans from Government, industry and the environmental world. The Council has recognized that population and consumption is a central concern and that it is one of the most important subgroups of the Council's activities.

While the Council is developing mottoes and programmes to put the United States on a sustainable course, we are also strongly pursuing energy programmes and energy conservation programmes. Our country is much more efficient in terms of energy than it used to be. We know we have a long way to go. ▶

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We are moving energetically on alternative materials development programmes, looking at ways in which products can be developed that are much less intrusive on the environment. We are developing very aggressive recycling programmes and initiatives related to clean water and clean air. These are all steps in the right direction. Is this enough? Not yet. But it is progress. And we think that the environmental ethic is a very, very strong one in the United States and we hope it will be getting stronger.

Q ***Does this mean that United States citizens have to scale back the whole concept of the American dream?***

A We think that most Americans are becoming much more efficient in the way they use resources and energy. The average automobile in the United States is twice as fuel efficient as it was 15 years ago. So Americans are learning that they have a responsibility to the broad environment and that this also makes good economic sense.

Q ***Often there are big headlines citing declines in consumer spending as bad news – followed a day or so later by reports saying we need to reduce consumption. Is this a conflict within free market economies, reflecting a lack of understanding of sustainable development?***

A We ought to start by understanding what it means to think about consumption. If we are consuming products that are entirely renewable – made with renewable energy – that is completely different from having a massive, quick run on the planet by consuming energy-intensive products that destroy our natural resources. So the definition of consumption and the inputs into the economy have to be understood as being variable. They are not all the same. Our hope in the United States is to move rapidly to an economy that is sustainable, uses sustainable resources and produces recyclable products that would be a great boon to our country and the world. That would also help the developing world avoid the mistakes made in the developed world.

Q ***Do you feel that if the United States adhered to the reduced consumption patterns called for by non-governmental organizations and developing countries it would cause economic chaos – not to mention a political disaster for the Administration?***

A No. I think that we must plan how to get prices right and how to make sure that we remove subsidies from environmentally harmful approaches. Long term, we have got to learn what the implications might be of shifting our tax burden away from taxing capital and labour to taxing consumption and pollution. These are some of the steps that have to be made. We have to think unconventionally. We have to think more creatively. The old command and control patterns that have dominated thinking about the environment are going to change – and have to change.

Q ***How much chance do some of those ideas have in passing as legislation in the United States Congress?***

A When (former) Senator John Heinz and I first proposed developing a broad programme for clean air, with a package of economic incentives in place of a package of command and control measures, it was ridiculed by almost every environmental group. But it has now become accepted economics and an accepted way of going about business. I am sure that many of the ideas today

are going to be controversial among environmental and business groups but, if anything, most of them will again become conventional wisdom.

Q ***Will President Clinton support you on these ideas?***

A President Clinton has responded positively to every request that I have made in terms of signing the Biodiversity Convention, in terms of setting targets in timetables for global climate change, in terms of providing major political support for our initiatives on population. He has been absolutely superb. I could not ask for any greater support.

Q ***You have obviously encountered opposition from the Vatican and various countries on some issues, especially family planning and abortion. Is there room for compromise here?***

A The world for the most part is very, very concerned about sharp population growth and I think almost every government in the world wants to stabilize its population. It is up to each government to decide how to do that and I do not think anybody has the right to tell a government what to do and how to do it. And we certainly believe that there should be no coercion with any government or any individual. That means women should not be forced to have children or an abortion. Coercion should not be part of any national or personal strategy for population stabilization.

Q ***There has been some progress in slowing population growth in a number of developing countries. Much of it has to do with economics. Do you feel that debt reduction and a levelling of the economic playing field must occur before the population and environment problems in the developing world will abate?***

A It used to be said that development was the best contraceptive. Subsequently, we have learned that the population growth rate in many countries is moving much more rapidly than economic growth and consequently standards of living are declining. I think most countries have come to realize that. We have to liaise to have aggressive population stabilization programmes, but accompany those with strong economic development programmes. The question then becomes: what is a strong economic development programme? That, in my opinion, has to start with basic education programmes, basic child health programmes, basic family planning programmes – all of which are the route to successful economic development.

Q ***In some developing nations structural reforms have resulted in a reduction of various health and education services. At the same time the population growth rate has also dropped. Is this a necessary evil?***

A Structural reforms are absolutely necessary. One of the things that has to be done is getting the prices right so that you are not in the process of subsidizing and/or running incredibly inefficient economies. But, as you say, you also have to be very aware that it is imperative to maintain basic health systems and basic education programmes. So you have to do both things. You have to keep your eye on the target of having a modern economy, but that modern economy is going to require basic education and basic health care •

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Edited by Joe Kirwin

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KAMAL NATH

POPULATION AND THE ENVIRONMENT

> 'With equitable development comes the environmental protection that leads to sustainability... the elimination of poverty is the first objective'

Within the 25 states of India there are very distinct demographic patterns. In the states with a higher rate of development and per capita income, we in the Indian Government know there is a lower birth rate than in poorer states.

This distinct, irrefutable pattern has a direct relationship to our position taken in the preparatory talks for the United Nations International Conference on Population and Development. We know that population boils down to development. We learned from our mistakes in the 1960s that command and control measures to slow population growth do not work.

If a family has children and has the opportunity to feed, clothe and educate them, it will. But that costs money and therefore there is an incentive to keep the family to a minimum. But if children are the only social security parents have as they try to eke out a living on the land or in the city, there is every incentive to have a large family that includes three or four sons who will be around to ensure some kind of survival.

So it does not take a scientific expert to realize that birth rates drop with proper, equitable development.

With that equitable development comes the environmental protection that leads to sustainability. This is why we have argued long and loud that environmental issues should not be dealt with in the text for the Programme of Action to be signed in Cairo.

These issues have been extensively discussed in the Rio process and our position has always been that linkages between population and environmental degradation are over emphasized. Basically it comes down to the same old lack of understanding that government representatives and non-governmental organizations in the North have of the mammoth task we face due to extensive poverty – poverty that in many parts of the world is getting worse.

The preoccupation with environmental protection by people in the North when it comes to population is a kind of red herring. It simply does not get to the core of the problem that will not go away until debt reduction, internalized environmental costs, technology transfer and development aid money are satisfactorily addressed.

Strengthening our argument that Northern priorities are out of order is the consumption pattern issue. It is a fact that the average citizen of the North places a far heavier burden on the environment than a citizen in the developing world. In some cases a person from the North depletes the world's natural resource base as much as 100 times more than a citizen from the developing world.

In the two years since Rio this issue has merely received lip service. We do welcome the United States reversing the Bush Administration's position that 'the American lifestyle is not up for negotiation'. But the bottom line is: what is being done about it? Not much, in our estimation.

The success of democratic societies hinges on an informed public making intelligent decisions. We feel that if people in the North really were informed by their governments and media of how everything they do, from driving cars to buying a house to eating certain kinds of food, depletes the natural resource base and degrades the environment, we would see some progress on the consumption issue. Perhaps the momentum of Rio spurred some awareness in the North of overconsumption, but enlightenment seemed to be shortlived.

In concluding, I can only say that countries such as India see the elimination of poverty as their first objective. Within the limitations of our resources we do a great deal to conserve our environment and forests and also avoid the consequences of industrial and urban pollution.

The provision of food, shelter and drinking water are our most basic concerns, along with women's literacy and health. We believe that economic growth, enhanced capacities and the greater role and status of women are what will lead both to lower population growth rates and to reducing the pressure on the environment •

Kamal Nath is the Indian Minister of Environment and Forests.

RACHEL KYTE

The draft Programme of Action which will be negotiated and agreed at the United Nations International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo in September 1994, marks a departure from the previous plan, the World Population Plan of Action agreed at the World Population Conference in Bucharest in 1974 and then updated at the International Conference on Population in Mexico City in 1984. In fact it has roots in the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) and takes from Agenda 21 in that it endeavours to form an integrated approach to population and development. While UNCED made the link between environment and development, it left to the Cairo Conference the link between these two and population. As one of the draft's bases for action states: 'The everyday activities of all human beings, communities, and countries are interrelated with population change, patterns and levels of use of natural resources, the state of the environment, and the pace and quality of economic and social development.'

> 'We have moved forward from the impasse of consumption and population at Rio'

Such integration necessarily moves the Programme into the fields of migration, human rights, women's health and rights, gender equity and social development and environment. And not without some trepidation from the drafters who have found the usually sedate field of demography besieged by activists of constituencies from whom they traditionally had remained hidden.

The links between population and environment have been forged with an eye to Agenda 21, where very tentative correlations were made between population growth and structure and consumption and production patterns. One of the ugliest political trade-offs of the UNCED era was that of North versus South, population growth versus overconsumption as the driving force of poverty and environmental degradation. The negotiations around the Cairo Programme have recognized that neither wealth nor poverty are determinants of population's stress on the environment, but that consumption and production patterns, environmental fragility, security, empowerment of women, their social and economic status, and equitable social development are all factors that together, or by their absence, create situations where man takes the ecosystem to its limits.

The Programme has been criticized for not containing 'enough on environment'. But it is difficult to talk of population and environment without considering patterns of development behaviour. There is no directly proportionate link between numbers of people and environmental degradation. There is a clear link, however, to the threats that their lifestyles pose – the waste generated, the pollution, the destruction. But purely to equate numbers with devastation is to walk the dangerous path towards coercive policies that aim to cap population growth arbitrarily, necessarily removing individual choice and responsibility from development planning.

In fact the draft Programme shows that we have moved some way forward from the impasse of consumption and population at UNCED. This is in part due to the change in United States administration, and in part due to the work, especially in Europe, in the processes directly following UNCED in the Commission on Sustainable Development, which seek to increase our understanding of how to deal with these 'lifestyle' issues in the policy arena. The change in rhetoric is not yet matched by action, but the preparations for Cairo have taken the practical approach of building on our understanding of the collective political will revealed in UNCED's snapshot, and have updated it. Further, they have given the normally separate constituencies of civil society working on human rights, population, environment, development and women's issues the chance to forge alliances and to understand different perspectives – essential for building the critical mass for change.

The link between population and sustainable development in fact poses one of time's thorniest conundrums – weighing individual rights, in this case the right to choose, if, when, and how many children to have and to have the means to ensure the health of oneself and one's children and the best interests of the community, dependent upon the environment for its health and economic well-being.

What the Cairo Conference process has begun to articulate is that these two things are not mutually exclusive. If individuals – in particular individual women – are empowered to make the choices they wish to make, they will make the 'right decisions' for themselves, for their families and communities and for their environment •

Rachel Kyte is an independent consultant on environment and development issues based in New York, and advises the International Women's Health Coalition on policy relating to the Cairo Conference.

Mark Edwards/Still Pictures

Population panic damages women

Kalpana Sharma argues that ordinary women, not governments, know best

Women are at the centre of the discussion on population – but policy makers and demographers have only just realized it. Too often in the past they have seen women as statistics, people whose ability to reproduce must be controlled. In their eyes, if there were too few people, women had to be made to 'contribute' by producing more; if there were too many, they had to be instructed to stop.

Today, thanks in large measure to an articulate and organized women's movement worldwide, the rights of women have become the focus of debate within the context of population policies. There is a growing body of evidence that shows that this is the right approach. But some governments of both developing and industrialized countries still forget this because they are panicked by rapid population growth.

Policies that view growing numbers of people as a problem, without taking the reasons for the increase – such as the lack of economic development or the absence of health care – into account, ultimately lead to coercion and the violation of rights.

Governments have resorted to a variety of measures to control the reproductive functions of women, particularly poor women, on the premise that the state knows the optimal number of people that can live in a country.

Women have paid an unacceptably high price in some countries where fertility rates have been drastically reduced. Between 1950 and 1977, for example, an estimated 215,000 women were sterilized in Puerto Rico. The fertility rate declined dramatically, as a result, but at the cost of the individual rights of thousands of women who were given no choice in the matter.

Women pay the price

Perhaps such an approach would never be openly adopted today, with the growing emphasis on human rights and women's status. But in many countries, governments are trying to introduce invasive or hormonal contraceptives as part of their family planning packages. Women's groups are raising a hue and cry against this. They do not oppose the products as such, but they object to their being primarily recommended to poor women who have inadequate access to health care – or none at all. They argue that millions of women will be harmed, because many of these contraceptives are effectively controlled by the people who provide them rather than by those who use them.

Many governments are also tempted to aim all their family planning messages only at women – and to ignore men. In the mid-1970s India's sterilization programme targeted men, but the political backlash was so strong that the Government virtually abandoned the programme. Since then sterilizations have remained part of the Government's official family planning programme, but 90 per cent of them have been performed on women. As women are powerless, there has been little protest against the policy. At root, it was driven by demographics and women, being the softer target, were chosen to meet it.

All population policies must be

There is no short cut to ensuring that the poorest and most powerless, particularly women, have access to the benefit of development...

located within sound programme packages that ensure that quality health care is provided to the poor. If this is done, each woman will be in a position to decide the kind of contraceptive that she or her husband should use. In the absence of such health care, when the woman's voice is never heard, she becomes a victim of the state's pro-natalist or anti-natalist policies, that do not have her best interests at heart.

Quality health care needed

This kind of approach is counterproductive. It has already led to people, and particularly poor women, believing that all health care messages are family planning messages in disguise, and that family planning only means sterilization. As a result, women approach official health providers (where they exist) with fear. If the aim of the family planning programme is to provide reproductive health care, it is certainly not achieving it. There is enough evidence to show the folly of policies that fail to place population growth within the confines of overall development.

New policies that aim to provide a full health care package for the poor first have to overcome this barrier of fear arising from the failed policies of the past. Future policies must ensure that governments are no longer driven by panic.

As with most such fears, there is little factual basis for this. Of course, the world's population has grown rapidly in the last two decades, but this is not just due to an increase in fertility rates but because people in poor countries are living longer and more infants and their mothers are surviving childbirth.

But, is this so-called population explosion something to worry about? Can the world's natural resources support the growing numbers? The answer is linked to consumption patterns and lifestyles. If the whole world aspires to live and consume as much as an average American does today, then the world's resources are clearly inadequate to support even the present 5.7 billion people inhabiting the Earth. But if the average American is persuaded to halve his consumption, and at the same time millions of poor people, especially women, are given access to education, employment and quality health care, there could be enough for all. The two have to go together.

The soundest approach

No matter how long it takes to bring down fertility rates, there is no short cut to ensuring that the poorest and most powerless, particularly women, have access to the benefit of development in the widest sense of the term. Governments have before them enough living examples to show that this is the soundest long-term approach to bringing down fertility rates.

Much of this new thinking is now being reflected in documents being prepared for meetings like the United Nations International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo. The real test, however, lies in the kinds of policies governments adopt and the manner in which they implement them •

Kalpana Sharma is Special Correspondent with The Hindu, *India.*

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GrassrootS

DONATUS DE SILVA

PUTTING PEOPLE'S REAL NEEDS FIRST

The success of a community of tribal people in India

Villages in the Kundam area, right in the centre of India in the state of Madhya Pradesh, share many of the problems of their counterparts all over the developing world. But in just a dozen years they have boosted female literacy sixfold, cut the birth rate by more than 60 per cent, and reduced infant mortality four times over. Their story demonstrates dramatically what community participation can achieve.

Some 80,000 people live in the 192 villages of the Kundam area, spread over nearly 1,000 square kilometres of hills. Most of the villages can only be reached by foot, and are particularly inaccessible in the rainy season. Firewood is the main source of energy and deforestation is rife.

Nearly three-quarters of the people belong to India's original tribes: most are poor and work as agricultural labourers or in menial jobs. A third own no land.

Tribal customs and values influence attitudes and the social structure. The tribal people treat women, kept subordinate in the local Hindu communities, as important family members and give them considerable independence. Men and women enjoy equal rights in marriage and control their own earnings.

But strenuous work in the fields, frequent pregnancies and perpetual anaemia made life difficult for the women. Girls often married early – at an average of 14.5 years old – and started bearing children immediately. Many pregnancies ended in abortion.

MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING

The Family Planning Association of India (FPAI) launched a project in 1980 to change the quality of life there. Supported by the International Planned Parenthood Federation and Population Concern, it covered 65 of the area's villages (the rest came under the Government family planning control programme).

Unlike some population control programmes, it did not immediately push condoms or coax people to undergo vasectomies. Instead, project leaders sat down with community leaders and sought their views on what should be done, taking time to develop mutual understanding, even though the community leaders had welcomed the project from the start. Together they worked out their priorities, including employment, vocational training, education, health, providing safe water, building and repairing roads, and lifting the crippling burden of debt which the very high interest rates (24-36 per cent a year) of local money lenders placed on the shoulders of the poor.

Local people were chosen in consultation with the community leaders to spearhead the project, and were given intensive training in health care for mothers and children, first aid, family planning methods and communications skills.

These 'community welfare workers', who each received a small honorarium, were the eyes and the ears of the project, calling at homes and listening to the villagers' problems. As they came from the community, they knew it at first hand and enjoyed local confidence.

MEETING REAL NEEDS

They spoke to villagers about the importance of caring for both male and female children, and gave advice on family planning methods. They discussed the benefits of small families, of girls marrying at a later age, of immunizing children, and of giving mothers regular check ups both before and after they gave birth. They arranged for mobile health clinics to visit the villages,

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and put couples who requested family planning services in touch with Government health workers. And they provided feedback, briefing the project staff on the villagers' needs and views.

The project team, led by Dr. K. Seshagiri Rao, then FPAI's project director and now its Assistant Secretary-General, also organized training sessions for teachers, opinion leaders and members of village committees on the importance of health, hygiene, family welfare and basic education. The sessions gave them new skills and knowledge, enhancing their prestige in the villages, and enabling them to pass on information and encourage people to take part in the village development programmes.

As a result, villagers formed their own groups to tackle their problems, which acted as links between the communities and the FPAI. Prayer groups discussed beliefs and action, reinforcing positive traditional customs and values and creating new attitudes to life and work.

INVOLVING WOMEN

Special women's groups worked to raise the status of women. The project staff were convinced, right from the start, that their efforts would fail unless women were wholeheartedly involved in the programme. The project established a credit scheme to provide interest free loans to both men and women so that they could start and develop small businesses. Many women took advantage of them to establish such businesses. Loan repayments were made on time.

The local communities were encouraged to work on their own environment and development initiatives starting with small projects and then moving on to bigger ones. These included tree planting; setting up adult education centres; constructing water tanks and temples; and building, clearing and repairing roads. Special training programmes for both men and women developed such skills as carpentry, farming, knitting, tailoring and cycle repairing.

At first, the project provided limited funds to get things going. As the community's confidence grew, this support was gradually withdrawn, and the people raised their own funds through local committees and began to tap the resources of the Government agencies concerned with tribal development.

All this created a demand in the villages for information and knowledge, and several education programmes were launched to meet it. Teachers were encouraged to establish adult education classes. A small library – containing books on such issues as environment, development, nutrition, sanitation, population and family planning, was set up.

Information programmes created awareness about health and family welfare, and there were personal counselling programmes, group discussions, meetings, exhibitions, seminars and film shows.

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Local communities were encouraged to work on their own environment and development initiatives

During the 12 years of the project, which officially came to an end in 1992:

- The proportion of couples practising family planning rose from 19.9 to 68 per cent.
- The birth rate was cut from 3.6 to 1.4 per cent.
- The infant mortality rate plummeted from 13 to 3.2 per cent.
- Female literacy increased from 7 to 45 per cent.
- Some 145 community-based distributors provided contraceptives to the community.

Most significant of all, the villagers took over the project themselves when it officially ended. An implementation committee, created by the local groups, continues the development of the area, underlining again that community participation is the key to successful development •

Donatus de Silva, a Sri Lankan journalist and writer, is the editor of Against All Odds, Breaking the Poverty Trap *(Panos, 1989).*

Mark Edwards/Still Pictures/UNEP

Helping citizens save their cities

The Habitat II Secretariat outlines a strategy for defusing the world's exploding cities

More than a billion people in today's urbanizing world live and work among the world's most degraded environments, where the smells and pollution are unbearable. They lack clean drinking water and rudimentary sanitation facilities. Garbage lies rotting outside their makeshift shelters, restricting access along narrow, unpaved pathways and clogging makeshift surface drains. Diarrhoea, typhoid and food-poisoning are ever-present facts of life.

The situation is getting worse, even though cities are making growing contributions to the economies of developing countries. More and more urban residents lack the resources to meet their basic needs of food, water, clothing and shelter. Slums and squatter settlements grow. Untreated sewage, uncontrolled industrial effluents and rapidly growing numbers of motor vehicles pollute air, water, coasts and croplands. There is little or no protection for workers from unsafe workplaces, over-long working hours and excessive travel to and from home. Urban expansion is, all too often, haphazard and unplanned.

Most of these problems are linked to the failure, or inability, of governments to provide effective regulatory and planning frameworks to address the problems of poorer citizens and protect the urban (and national) environment from contamination.

All these difficulties reduce productivity and undermine social stability. All bring costs which make it hard for cities to develop optimally and sustainably. Removing these impediments calls for policy changes, and sometimes radical departures from existing roles and responsibilities in urban development.

Mobilizing self-help

The solution does not simply lie in increased public spending or expanded direct government involvement. Instead, governments should concentrate on supportive and facilitative acts to stimulate the desire for development among urban residents, especially the poor. Rather than trying to curb self-help urban settlement, and other informal activities like food vending on streets, governments should adopt strategies that mobilize people to improve their neighbourhoods and carry out their economic activities without infringing laws.

Rapid urbanization generates an escalating demand for housing and infrastructure, a demand that is growing too fast for the public sector to meet. Governments should, therefore, concentrate on a facilitating role by providing an effective policy and regulatory framework which mobilizes the resources of non-governmental actors, that is, the formal and informal private sector, community based and non-governmental organizations and individual households.

The enabling strategy promoted by the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000 urges governments to concentrate their efforts on those functions which the non-governmental sector cannot undertake effectively. These include the provision of major infrastructure networks for water, sewerage, energy, communications and transport, the mobilization of finance for housing and services and the appropriate revision of laws, regulations and codes for land use and construction.

Start at the local level

The Global Strategy for Shelter recognizes that human settlements problems are often more clearly identified and remedied at the local, rather than national level. The first step is to give cities and towns of all sizes the power to make their own decisions and raise their own revenues and to pursue development

By the year 2000, only six years away, almost half the world will be living in urban areas.

Africa will experience the highest urban growth rate; an average of 4.5 per cent between 1995 and 2000 and 4.3 per cent thereafter. Latin America, already urbanized, will not have such a large increase. Absolute growth will be greatest in Asia, where cities will gain another 210 million people between 1995 and the year 2000.

Roughly 60 per cent of the GNP of the less developed countries is urban-generated, by about one-third of the population. Urban centres may account for as much as 80 per cent of GNP growth by the end of the century.

opportunities without undue constraints from central and regional authorities. This is a necessary, if not sufficient, condition to allow intermediate and small settlements increasingly to exercise their crucial productive and service functions in regard to their rural constituencies and specific local conditions.

Such a step must, however, go hand in hand with concerted attempts to improve existing urban management procedures and practices, particularly in such key areas as finance, land, infrastructure operations and maintenance and service delivery. This implies training in all skills categories as well as reorganization of administrative structures in order to achieve maximum efficiency and coordination. When accompanied by increased freedom on the part of local authorities to raise and spend revenues as part of a decentralization policy, increased efficiency can improve the level of infrastructure and service delivery in urban areas to support economic growth and enhance the quality of urban life.

Environmental considerations also have to be taken into account. Urban management and planning practices must minimize resource depletion as towns and cities grow by ensuring that environmental resources are used wisely and that wastes are recycled wherever possible or disposed of in environmentally friendly ways.

Promoting healthy, sustainable cities is about making the provision of basic health care and a safe living environment more responsive to residents' needs and demands. It is about local governments giving city residents more power in decision making, a bigger role in community service provision and more say in determining priorities. The contribution of the urban poor to the construction and maintenance of cities should also be acknowledged and their shelter needs and living environments be given priority attention.

It is in the cities that the environmental, population, social, gender and economic issues will have to be resolved

Governments' success in curtailing ill-health, disablement and premature death in cities will largely depend on the extent to which they cooperate with the community sector – transforming the current atmosphere of indifference, or indeed repression, into one of partnership. And this community approach to improve the living and working conditions of the poor can only be effective if women – one half of the population – participate in strategy formulation and implementation, both as contributors and beneficiaries.

Cities in both the developing and developed world are faced with complex, serious and pressing environmental challenges. They do not necessarily have the capacity or the experience to rise to them. The Habitat II Conference, or City Summit, to be held in Istanbul in 1996 will focus on the Future of Cities, recognizing that it is in the cities that the environmental, population, social, gender and economic issues will have to be resolved. Some cities are successfully responding to their challenges, and the Conference will be a forum for exchanging positive experiences and for generating new ideas and insights.

The goal of the City Summit is to make the world's cities, towns and villages healthy, safe, equitable and sustainable. In order to achieve this, the Conference will debate and adopt Principles and Commitments and a Global Plan of Action for human settlements development, addressing the next two decades but focussing on urgent action in the first five years (1996-2000) •

Only 209 of India's 3,119 towns and cities had partial or full sewerage systems in 1989. Seventy-three million work days a year were lost due to water related diseases.

The number of private vehicles in Bombay increased by 244 per cent between 1961 and 1978 and the number of buses rose by 158 per cent. In Delhi, the increase was 560 per cent and 380 per cent respectively.

In Los Angeles, in one 90-day period in 1989, 237 overcrowded conditions were reported to housing authorities. One case involved 62 Indochinese refugees residing in one unit – including 36 in the garage.

There is increasing evidence of the indirect effects of NO_2, mainly from car exhausts, on asthma. In Britain, hospital admissions for childhood asthma increased fivefold from 1979 to 1989 and it is now classed as the most common chronic disease of childhood.

Sean Sprague/Panos Pictures

Fending for themselves

Jan Rocha describes how population growth is decreasing in a Catholic country

During the 1970 World Cup the Brazilian squad was urged on with a patriotic song which went 'Ninety millions are cheering on the team....'

Twenty-four years later it is World Cup time again, but now the fans would have to sing 'One hundred and fifty millions....' The unwary might conclude that Brazil, the world's sixth most populous country, is still in the grip of a population explosion.

Yet no other country can match the amazingly rapid fall in population growth that Brazil has experienced in the last three decades. The average 6 children per woman of child bearing age at the end of the 1950s has dropped to 2.5 at the beginning of the 1990s. The annual population growth rate of 3 per cent at the beginning of the 1960s was down to 1.9 per cent by the end of the 1980s.

Surgery and pills

These momentous changes have not, however, happened as a result of a deliberate government policy but rather in the absence of any official population policy. The reduction in population growth has been brought about by the use of surgical methods, sterilization and abortion, and of contraceptive pills mostly sold over the counter at chemist's shops without a doctor's prescription. Brazil is the fourth largest producer of contraceptive pills in the world.

Abortions, according to Dr. Elza Berquo, one of the Brazilian delegation to the United Nations International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, number a least 1.5 million every year. Because abortion is a criminal offence, except in proven cases of rape or risk to the mother's life, most are backstreet operations and the botched results fill public hospitals and cause high maternal mortality rates.

In its official report to the Cairo Conference, Brazil accepts that sterilization is widespread. In some of the country's poorer regions over 70 per cent of women in the fertile age group resort to it if they want to avoid having children. The average age of those sterilized is falling, with an increasing number under 25 years old.

> *'We don't want to antagonize the Vatican, but we can't go against our own constitution'*

The report comments: 'What is most impressive in this situation is the lack of options for Brazilian women, especially at a moment when new technologies in the contraceptive areas should theoretically widen the choice of available methods.'

The reason why Brazil has shunned an official population policy and left women to fend for themselves has much to do with the influence of the Catholic Church, in what is still nominally the largest Catholic country in the world. The Church is still able to limit Government campaigns on safe sex, prevent the distribution of alternative contraceptive methods by Government clinics, and maintain abortion as a criminal offence.

A right of Brazilians

But diplomat Ernesto Rubarth, head of the Foreign Ministry's United Nations division that organized the compilation of the official report, based on seminars with specialists, NGOs, academics and Church representatives, said that Brazil's position on family planning now had to obey what was written in the 1988 constitution and the consensus achieved at previous international and regional conferences like the Latin American and Caribbean meeting on population and development. The 1988 constitution lays down the right of Brazilian families to decide the number and spacing of their children.

'We don't want to antagonize the Vatican but we can't go against our own constitution,' he said.

For Brazilians the fall in population growth has not been accompanied by a rise in living standards. The Government emphasizes the empowerment of women and the excessive consumption of the rich countries as overlooked but vital factors in the population/development equation. But the report admits that, although women's participation in politics is growing at all levels, only seven women have ever held ministerial office in Brazil•

Jan Rocha is the Brazilian correspondent for The Guardian, *London.*

NEW REGULATIONS ON HAZARDOUS WASTES

When the weary, beleaguered delegates to this past March's Second Meeting of the Parties to the Basel Convention on Hazardous Wastes left the Geneva Convention Centre, a most unusual source heaped praise on the diplomats. Greenpeace campaigners, often considered pesty gadflies by delegates, displayed a huge 10- by 20-metre banner heralding their work.

Of course, the unprecedented role reversal for Greenpeace had to do with the decision taken by the parties to prohibit by 1997 the exportation of hazardous wastes for recycling purposes from Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to non-OECD states. Having invested in a lobby campaign that included a team of more than 10 campaigners as well as small gifts to all the delegates, it was obvious Greenpeace considered its efforts a major achievement.

But when the pomp and ceremony were over and the last delegate had left Geneva, the impact of the decision was still being debated. According to Pierre Portas, the Technical Officer of the Secretariat of the Basel Convention, much of the industry 'dependent upon secondary materials from the multi-billion dollar scrap metal trade' has told the UNEP-sponsored Secretariat that it 'is now in a state of shock. And, although industry is fully supportive of the objectives of the Basel Convention, it will organize itself to respond to this prohibition.'

ENFORCING THE LAW

While industry planned its strategy, law enforcement to control illegal traffic in hazardous wastes became a must. The March meeting requested the Secretariat to explore the possibility of cooperation with Interpol, the international law enforcement secretariat.

Quick action was taken. After a meeting of its Working Group on Environmental Crime in May, Interpol agreed to establish a mechanism for information exchange to help police the trade in toxic wastes.

'This kind of cooperation, which constitutes one element of a comprehensive strategy adopted by the Basel Convention during its March meeting for the monitoring and prevention of illegal traffic, is important,' says Ivona Rummel-Bulska, the coordinator of the Secretariat of the Basel Convention. 'If we are going to have an effective implementation of the Convention, this, along with the cooperation of United Nations Regional Commissions and other legal arrangements related to compliance procedure and further development of a protocol on liability and compensation, which is in draft form but with brackets, needs to occur.'

CLEARER DEFINITION NEEDED

According to Pierre Lieben, the hazardous waste expert with the OECD, there needs to be a much clearer definition of what are the materials that will be banned as of 1997.

'We have been inundated with calls from industry trying to find how to define what secondary waste materials exported for recovery will be covered under the decision that goes into effect in 1997,' said Lieben. 'I do believe one of the priorities now for the parties of the Convention is to give a precise definition of what is covered.'

But officials within the Basel Convention Secretariat are of the opinion that the classification of the materials to be covered by the Convention will be up to national legislatures.

And this is where industry, according to delegates who participated in the International Recovery Bureau ▶

Convention held in Spain in May, plans to take its case.

'The real impact of this decision has not been realized by environmentalists and others who have supported it,' says Rolf Boehnke, the Secretary-General of the London-based International Lead and Zinc Study Group. 'This is in fact going to mean a net loss for the environment. Many materials that are recycled will now have to be landfilled.

'Basically what has happened is that an environmentally sound industry that plays by the rules is paying for the pirates out there who don't,' Boehnke added. 'And those pirates certainly won't decrease. In fact they will probably increase. We need to convey this information much more effectively to counter the superficial arguments of groups like Greenpeace.'

By far the biggest concern within industry – both in the developed and developing worlds – are the scrap metals such as lead, zinc and copper. In many Southeast Asian nations such as China, South Korea and Malaysia, as well as in Latin America and Eastern Europe, many industries rely on these metals from OECD nations.

'Right now it looks as if some of the non-OECD nations will have to try to form regional trading blocs in order to replace the loss of secondary materials,' says Portas.

Greenpeace and other proponents of the ban, including Danish Environment Minister Sven Auken, who was the first OECD nation minister to support the controversial measure, dismiss the post-vote complaints.

'The only way the toxic waste trade will diminish is with this measure,' says Auken. 'If you look back at every major environmental law passed, industry reacts the same way. Once they face up to the fact, changes will be made to adjust to the new regulations. I am quite convinced that this will be seen as one of the great post-Rio achievements in this decade' •

DEVELOPMENTS AT THE CSD

The United Nations Environment Programme was asked by the Government of Denmark at this year's Second Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) to prepare a legal instrument designed to halt the export of toxic chemicals from countries where they are already banned.

'This situation is an outrage,' said Danish Environment Minister Sven Auken. 'It is similar to the trade in hazardous wastes where toxic material is being exported from rich to poor nations. We stopped that with the new Basel Convention ban and now we need to do the same with the export of toxic chemicals.'

The request by Denmark falls in line with UNEP's role as task manager – the lead United Nations agency – on the issue of toxic chemicals. Currently the Environmental Law and Institutions Programme Activity Centre (ELI/PAC) at UNEP is in the preliminary stages of preparing a possible legal instrument on the export of toxic chemicals. Overall, of the 13 decisions adopted by the CSD, seven contained requests or recommendations for UNEP.

BIODIVERSITY AND DESERTIFICATION

Two of the most important requests made by the CSD to UNEP for next year's meeting concern biological diversity and desertification. As the task manager for those issues, UNEP will provide material following the first meeting of the parties to the Biological Diversity Convention to be held later this year. The desertification report will follow the recent negotiations for a convention as called for at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.

On freshwater resources, UNEP is continuing its work as the focal point among various United Nations agencies. The Water Unit, along with the Global Environment Monitoring System (GEMS), has begun its work in preparing a global freshwater assessment to be ready for a special session of the General Assembly in 1997.

UNEP TO PLAY KEY ROLE

On the issue of trade and environment, CSD has asked UNEP to play a key role in the new World Trade Organization that will replace GATT. As a result, the Geneva-based Trade and Environment Unit of UNEP will continue its work in outlining the provisions and dispute-settlement mechanisms of the multilateral trading system and those of multilateral environmental agreements. The CSD also called on the various United Nations agencies, including UNEP, to define the impact of internalization of environmental costs on competitiveness and trade earnings, particularly in developing countries, as well as to study the environmental impact assessment of trade policies.

Other decisions taken by the CSD that concern UNEP include:

- A request to study further the concept, requirements and implications of sustainable development and international law.
- An invitation to UNEP, as the task manager for hazardous wastes, to consider how national

environmental plans for the military establishment relating to hazardous waste management could be designed and implemented.

■ An invitation to UNEP and other agencies to provide conditions and new modalities for the involvement of small and medium-sized enterprises in long-term international technology partnership arrangements.

■ An invitation to UNEP and other agencies to develop new partnerships with major groups such as NGOs and business groups •

NEWS IN BRIEF

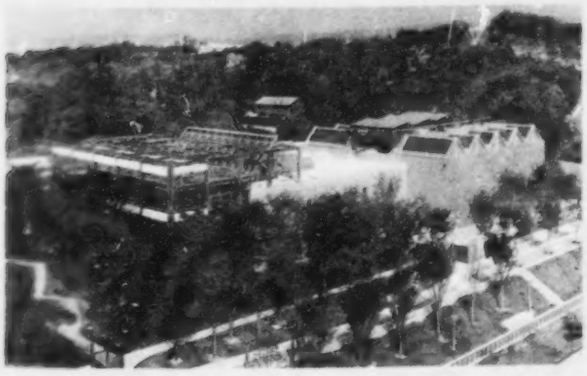
International Environmental Technology Centre

UNEP and the Government of Japan have joined forces to facilitate the transfer of technology to the developing world and nations of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union with the recent opening of the International Environmental Technology Centre (IETC) in Japan.

IETC will be based in Osaka and Otsu and will operate on an annual budget of more than $3 million.

'The objective of the Centre is to strengthen the capabilities of developing countries and countries with economies in transition to improve environmentally sound managament of large cities and freshwater lakes and reservoirs or basins,' said Elizabeth Dowdeswell, Executive Director of UNEP, when she helped open the Centre in April. 'We hope to do this by increasing technology cooperation and partnerships. The strategy will be for the Centre to act as a proactive intermediary between sources and users of environmentally sound technology by bringing together collaborating parties and systematically building up capacities.'

IETC will employ a cluster management approach where professionals are organized in groups to concentrate on selected priority areas. They will be supervised by a management team. IETC will work closely with other substantive offices in UNEP, Habitat and the supporting foundations in Japan. An international advisory board will provide policy guidance •



UNEP

Banks sign environment principle accord

Twelve commercial banks from transitional and developing economies have recently signed the 'Statement by Banks on the Environment and Sustainable Development', a series of commitments brokered by the United Nations Environment Programme to increase environmental principles in the financial services sector.

The 12 new banks join more than 40 other banks and financial institutions from across the globe •

Global forum to help save the tiger

Senior officials from 12 Asian nations have agreed to set up a Global Forum of Tiger Range States with the goal of coordinating their efforts to save the tiger from the threat of extinction. The new forum was established at the First Meeting of Tiger Range States on the Conservation of the Tiger, which was convened by the Government of India and UNEP •

WWF/Martin Harvey

Montreal Protocol update

The Copenhagen Amendment, which moved forward the phaseout dates for various ozone depleting chemicals, was ratified by more than 20 parties to the Montreal Protocol and came into effect on 20 June 1994, announced the UNEP Ozone Secretariat.

The new phaseout schedule includes a ban on the use of 15 different chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), carbon tetrachloride and methyl chloroform by 1996. Halons must be phased out by the end of 1994. Developing nations have a 10-year grace period.

The Copenhagen Amendment also requires a gradual phaseout of HCFCs, which are the primary replacement for CFCs, by the year 2030 •

HARD LESSONS IN POPULATION PLANNING

Mahbub ul Haq

I learned about population control the hard way. As Minister of Planning and Finance in Pakistan between 1982 and 1988 I was determined to get the population growth rate down. I decided that this had to have topmost priority in our development plans. So – in a most unusual step for a finance minister – I announced that there would be no limit to the money to be spent on family planning programmes, that funds would never be denied to them. And in 1984 USAID, the United States Agency for International Development, provided a $25 million grant to help.

Armed with naive statistics about the 'unmet demand' of willing couples for contraceptives, I set out to saturate the villages with condoms. We used the private sector to get them into every village shop. I had people design the most attractive dispensers, so that as each condom was sold another would fall into position – and people were fascinated just to watch them. We called them *SATHI* (companions) so that we could get round a ban on advertising condoms on radio and television: 'Take a *SATHI* with you' was our slogan.

I thought that such an initiative was going to go down well in history. But it was my greatest policy disaster. Despite the campaign, the population growth rate actually went up, from 3 to 3.1 per cent. What went wrong? The answer is that female literacy in the villages was only 6 per cent. Without investing in educating women, it was naive to expect investment in condoms to yield any effective results. If I had to do it all over again, I would put almost all that money into boosting female literacy.

Population growth is being regarded as a clinical issue or a medical problem rather than as a development issue. We have got to put development back onto the population agenda. No-one would deny that top priority must be given to reducing high rates of population growth in the developing world. But family planning programmes must be regarded as an integral part of the new models of sustainable human development. If they are divorced from such models – and pursued as condom-distribution programmes with a single-minded zeal to meet 'unmet demand' – they will fail.

The Programme of Action for the United Nations International Conference on Population and Development must include at least $2–3 billion additional investment in female education and $4 billion a year additional investment in child immunization and primary health care – vital for the success of family planning. It must point out that family planning programmes are an essential part of the much wider overall compact on human development between rich and poor nations that is so urgently needed. And it must focus on the empowerment of women as the decisive factor in any successful effort for population planning.

Mahbub ul Haq is Special Advisor to the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme.